

# Dover Township

2480 W CANAL ROAD

DOVER, PA 17315

Phone (717) 292-3634 • Fax (717) 292-1136

Toll Free 1-877-402-3552

[dovertwp@dovertownship.org](mailto:dovertwp@dovertownship.org)

[www.dovertownship.org](http://www.dovertownship.org)

Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Children & Youth Services Committee  
H.B. 1831 Hearing  
Rep. Karen Boback, Chair  
October 29, 2019

## Oral Testimony

Chalet Harris, Parks & Recreation Director  
Dover Township, York County

## Intro

Good Morning. My name is Chalet Harris and I am the Parks & Recreation Director of Dover Township, York County. Dover Township is located Northwest of York and Southwest of Harrisburg. We are a Class II Township with 21,000 residents. The southern portion of our Township is suburban, and our northern portion is rural. Most people who live in Dover Township work in York, Lancaster, Harrisburg, or Baltimore. Children from Dover Township attend the Dover Area School District. More than one half of the student population at Dover Area School District qualify for free or reduced lunch.

## Demographics

We have a definite divide between the “haves” and “have nots” in our community. As mentioned previously, more than half of children in the school district qualify for free or reduced lunch. We have families where grandparents, great-grandparents, or other family members are serving as the guardians for the children. Many of our families do not place their children in childcare because they cannot afford it or don’t need it. There are many families with either a stay-at-home-parent, a work-from-home-parent, a retired grandparent, or parents who work split shifts (one parent works day and another night) so they don’t have to use childcare. Many of these families do not put their little children into day care or traditional preschool programs because of the cost. For some families, our Preschool Playground program is the only organized program their child will have before school starts. If we were to cancel our program, we would be eliminating a socio-economical class from receiving any type of organized preschool program prior to kindergarten.

## Programming

For more than 40 years, Dover Township has offered a Preschool Playground program for children ages 3-5. This program meets Monday through Thursday from 9:30 am – 11:30 am for six weeks in the summer. The program costs \$45 for the entire six weeks. We always lose one day of the program because of our Old-Fashioned Carnival event. This means that the children are with us for a maximum of 46 hours throughout the duration of the program. There are some children who are in daycare for that many hours *a week*. The Preschool Playground is the only program that we

are running for preschool aged children. We do not want to offer more programming until more clarity can be provided regarding this issue.

We do not classify ourselves as a "childcare facility". We are not interested in pursuing childcare in our Township. We provide **programming** for our community to fill voids that are not offered from other businesses/organizations in our community. Parents are not dropping children off at our program to go to work. They are going to the grocery store, cleaning their house or taking a nap.

Our program meets or exceeds many requirements set forth by the State. Our staff have their appropriate clearances. The staff are all CPR/First aid certified. We have Mandated Reporters on staff. We exceed ratio requirements of 1 staff member to 10 children. We have three staff to a maximum of 20 children.

Our Township does not have a facility that would pass the inspection necessary to gain state licensure. The Preschool Playground program is currently offered in a 1750s era log house. In order to meet the necessary requirements for licensure, we would need to do a massive renovation or build an entire new building. These are not feasible for our department. In the past, our programs were offered in the school district's buildings. Previous school administrators decided not to allow any Township recreation programming in the school spaces. With new (current) administration in place, the use of the schools may become a possibility in the future. For now, we must use our own spaces. Our buildings are pavilions, park buildings, etc. that would not meet the qualifications.

### **Clarification**

I am here to ask for clarification of the law to show that municipal **programming** should not be expected to meet the same requirements as **private childcare facilities**. I feel that municipal programs should have requirements that must be met – i.e. clearances for staff, appropriate ratios, CPR/first aid training, proper sign-in/sign-out procedures, etc.

I thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Recreation departments are here to provide positive experiences for our residents. I hope you will see that many opportunities will be lost if clarification is not addressed on this issue.